



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MARINA DIMITRIJEVIC
COUNTY BOARD CHAIRWOMAN

October 29, 2012

An Open Letter to the Residents of Milwaukee County

Dear Friends,

It's time to set the record straight and, once again, to call on the Milwaukee County Executive to focus on collaboration.

The decision of the County Executive to issue a combative press release disparaging the open, legislative efforts of the Milwaukee County Board Committee on Finance, Personnel and Audit is unfortunate because citizens want to see their elected officials work together in a cooperative manner.

In that spirit, I ask the County Executive to work more collaboratively with Supervisors to gain support for his proposals at the front-end instead of overreacting to the legislative body's anticipated and standard review of a proposal at the back-end.

The passage of a budget is not a one-man show, and the County Board's current vetting of the 2013 Recommended Budget as introduced by the County Executive is democracy in action.

Tonight, the Board of Supervisors is hosting a public hearing on next year's budget at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, a Milwaukee County owned and operated facility. The Board has increased its outreach efforts to ensure that the public has every opportunity to participate and to voice their opinions on the 2013 Recommend Budget and the changes adopted by the County Board's Committee on Finance, Audit and Personnel.

This Committee, whose membership is diverse politically and geographically, has worked together to produce a compromise budget that reflects the values of the community while balancing the needs of Milwaukee County, our workforce and our future needs.

In deliberating the Recommended Budget, the Board is listening to you, the people who elected us. After the County Executive introduced his budget, Supervisors hosted town hall meetings, sent out surveys and responded to emails and calls from concerned neighbors throughout the month of October. Further, the Committee held a series of meetings where they received hours of public testimony in proceedings that were livestreamed online. The County Executive's staff and the Administration were at the table for each one of these meetings, so it is disingenuous for him now to say that these meetings lacked open deliberation. The legislative process is a transparent one that brings many voices to the table and stands in sharp contrast to the closed process used

by the Administration, in which a small group put together a budget without public scrutiny during the course of several months.

Instead of letting his proposals be evaluated on their own merit, the Executive is choosing to distort the truth of recent legislative actions. An extension of an open hand to the Board during its final days of deliberations would have better served the goal of collaboration than this spreading of misrepresentations.

To set the record straight, the Finance, Personnel and Audit Committee adopted, on an 8-1 vote, a fair and balanced budget that:

- Keeps property tax increases lower than the rate of inflation
- Asks public employees to pay more toward their health care costs than they currently do
- Reconfigures employee compensation by eliminating \$250, \$500 and \$750 bonuses and by cutting in half the County Executive's proposed employee wage increase in order to prioritize the existing health care benefit for all employees
- Invests more in public safety: restores funding to Sheriff's Department for a dedicated, proactive parks patrol and to the Countywide Paramedic program; transfers all wireless 911 calls to the City of Milwaukee; adds two new investigator positions to the District Attorney's office so there can be an increased focus on domestic violence cases; and installs driver protection shields to all MCTS buses
- Includes creative policies from Supervisors including studies, pilot programs and new solutions to old problems, such as rising health care costs and deferred maintenance in County Parks
- Promotes economic development tools to help small businesses succeed and to create local jobs with a microloan fund and new partnership with the Milwaukee County Research Park
- Allocates proper resources to the contingency fund, which is a budget practice suggested by both the independently elected Milwaukee County Comptroller as well as the non-partisan Public Policy Forum
- Creates a real Wellness program that is modeled after the private sector with the goal of improving employee health and reducing costs to the taxpayer over the long-term
- The Finance Committee unanimously (9-0) rejected the Executive's plan to eliminate health care benefits for part-time workers, which would undoubtedly compel many nurses to leave our already fragile Behavioral Health Division institution

Thank you for your time and attention. You, as residents and taxpayers of Milwaukee County, deserve the best possible representation and delivery of services from all branches and departments of County government. Please know the Milwaukee County Board is committed to you.



Marina Dimitrijevic
Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors

cc: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors